

ever, during the survey I noticed that they maintain a distance from the domestic stock. While the domestic buffaloes were seen grazing in the peripheral areas, the wild ones restricted themselves to the thick and impenetrable elephant-grass jungle.

The wild buffalo was well distributed throughout Dhakuakhana. The main reasons for decline were:

i) alteration of habitat for cultivation, mainly winter crops; (ii) hunting by the Mising (formerly plains Miri) tribe for food; and iii) attack by rinderpest in mid-1970s.

Before the rinderpest, an estimated 100-150 buffaloes were in the present area which extended upto Basudeo Than, Lesera and the proposed Bordoloni Sanctuary. It vanished from the Bordoloni area in the early eighties. One more buffalo habitat was available along the banks of the Brahmaputra river. The *chapories* (sandy islets and tracts) with tall grass provided ideal home for some scattered herds, which were sometimes augmented by arrivals from Majuli (Jorhat) and Dibrugarh areas. The last wild buffalo of the *chapories* was killed by the local Misings in 1984

at Bahir Bogori, near Tekeliphuta. It was a fine specimen (male) and its horn is now in my collection. The only other area where the buffalo is rarely met with, even today is the banks of the Subansiri river near Bebejia. Here the stragglers come from Kadam RF.

The future of the wild buffalo in Dhakuakhana is bleak. With only five animals surviving, that too in an area surrounded by villages and domestic stock, it is only a matter of time to declare it as 'locally extinct'. However, I submitted a proposal to the Government with clearance from the local administration, for a small sanctuary, namely the Borkalia Wildlife Sanctuary (4.6 sq. km) which will help this remnant buffalo population to recover for the time being and will also protect some wintering water fowls.

My thanks go to Padma Dihingia and Lankeswar Pegu for their help during the survey.

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6. SIGHTING OF CHRISTMAS ISLAND FRIGATE BIRD (*FREGATA ANDREWSI* MATHEWS) IN THE ANDAMANS

On 13/11/89 an unusual bird with long wingspan and forked tail was seen at 14-30 hrs., soaring initially low and later going very high in increasing circles, at Rangat Bay jetty, in Middle Andaman (approximately 12° 30' N and 93° E). Immediately a photograph was taken (200 mm, Nikon) for confirming the bird later on, along with a sketch and notes on special features. The bird was identified with the help of description and pictures given in the book "SEA BIRDS—AN IDENTIFICATION GUIDE" by Peter Harrison, as a juvenile of Christmas Island Frigate bird (*Fregata andrewsi*). This bird is restricted to Christmas Island (Indian Ocean) south of Java c. 11° S. No previous authentic record has been made from Indian waters, as stated by Salim Ali and Ripley in their book HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND

PAKISTAN (1983).

The juvenile of Christmas Island Frigate bird differs from first stage juvenile of Lesser Frigate bird in white belly and broader breast band; while its differentiation from juvenile Great Frigate bird is more difficult, but that species lacks white on axillaries.

This record was made soon after a severe cyclonic storm hit Middle Andamans in the early morning of 6th Nov. 1989, indicating this vagrant was carried by the cyclonic winds to the east coast of Andamans.

December 16, 1991 AJAI SAXENA
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